



February 18, 2021

My name is Jody Barr. I am the executive director of Council 4 AFSCME, a union of over 30,000 public and private employees. **We ask the Labor Committee and the General Assembly to support the concepts contained in Senate Bills, 660, 665 and 666.** We thank the General Assembly for passing legislation to provide such coverage to police officers, firefighters and parole officers in 2019. It has been a long and difficult battle to get this coverage restored after 26 years of having lost it. Yet, these three bills recognize that the job is not yet done.

It has long been labor's stance that all workers experiencing mental stress injury on the job should be eligible for workers' compensation. Connecticut's workers actually had such protection for decades until 1993. This coverage was lost in a major overhaul of the workers' compensation statutes, that also eliminated all mental health coverage from on the job injury.

PTSD coverage is now provided by at least 33 of the states. PTSD coverage has been found to cut down on the number of employee suicides, result in more than 90% of treated employees being able to return back to work and is low cost. It is our belief that it is more cost effective to treat employees, than to dismiss psychologically injured employees, have to hire and train new employees or provide for the costs that employers must bear after a suicide.

There are many workers here today who can tell you of the harrowing experiences that they have had to endure while keeping the public safe, trying to prevent death and injury and in trying to save lives. It is no wonder that such workers suffer some of the highest suicide rates and psychological injury rates.

Experiences of PTSD type injuries go back as early as western history is recorded. They go back to writings of historians in ancient Greece and Rome. Surely, we must be past the perceptions that psychological work injuries are some sort of made up injury. Hard science, as well as historical record, proves that PTSD exists.

What we ask of you today, is that you recognize this. We ask you to recognize the extraordinary courage and commitment that these employees muster every day to

do their jobs. We ask you to recognize that even the bravest and most steady can be injured by what they see, experience and hear on the job. Also, please understand that there is an oppositional system set up for those requesting workers' compensation, via the state Workers' Compensation Commission – injured workers must prove their case or their case is dismissed. This is a fact that the opponents of providing such coverage to workers seem to ignore.

Our union is happy to provide any information, research, expertise or personal witness to help such a bill get passed. Thank you for your consideration.

While we believe that it is well past time for all workers to have PTSI workers' compensation restored, we ask that at the very least that such coverage be extended to corrections employees, EMS workers, Judicial Branch hazardous duty employees and state and municipal emergency dispatch employees.